

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Screening methods for identifying compounds that bind to or activate corticotropin releasing factor₂ receptors (CRF₂R) and regulate or potentially regulate skeletal muscle mass or function *in vivo* are disclosed. Also disclosed are screening methods for identifying compounds that prolong or augment the activation of CRF₂Rs or of CRF₂R signal transduction pathways, increase CRF₂R or increase CRF expression are provided. Pharmaceutical compositions comprising CRF₂R agonists, antibodies to CRF₂R and methods for increasing skeletal muscle mass or function or for the treatment of skeletal muscle atrophy using CRF₂R as the target for intervention and methods for treatment of muscular dystrophies are described.